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# From Scientific Racism to Neoliberal Biopolitics

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## CHAPTER 24

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# FROM SCIENTIFIC RACISM TO NEOLIBERAL BIOPOLITICS *Using Foucault's Toolkit*

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LADELLE MCWHORTER

CRITICS have accused Michel Foucault of disempowering his readers by leaving them with no sense of political direction (Foucault 1994, 234). His genealogical analyses simply analyze, and his bleak depictions of interlocking and mutually reinforcing power relations provide no instructions for action and no hope for effecting change. Why, then, should social justice advocates and antiracists in particular bother to explore his work? Foucault responded to this charge:

Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction that concludes, "this, then, is what needs to be done." It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is. (Foucault 1994, 236)

Genealogy does not pose as political motivation, let alone moral imperative. It is a tool for those already engaged in resistance—not to dictate action but to enrich ongoing processes of analyzing and strategizing. With that understanding of genealogy's role, as I have argued (McWhorter 2009) and will argue here, Foucault's method can be extremely useful for confronting racism. In particular, his concepts of normalization and biopower are crucial for understanding how racism survived the demise of the nineteenth-century science that supported it and how it persisted throughout the twentieth century despite social, political, and economic change.

## FOUCAULT'S METHOD

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Genealogical work emphasizes contingency and complexity, as Colin Koopman puts it (Koopman 2013, chapter 3). It assumes that whatever phenomena it problematizes were

formed in the forces of history rather than given throughout time and universally (Foucault 1998, 376). Racism, a genealogist would therefore assume, exists only in its various historical manifestations in (usually institutionalized) practices, including the rationalizing practices that give those practices their sense, and it changes as networks of power change. Despite its contingency, however, racism is a remarkably persistent feature of our cultural landscape. From a genealogical perspective, then, we must wonder, What gives racism that ability to persist, its *apparent* transhistorical stability? This is the question genealogy investigates.

A genealogist of racism looks first for moments when racism's operations seem unfamiliar, for what Foucault calls "a breach of self-evidence" (1994, 226). In their modern origins, ideas of race soon became coextensive with what theorists today view as racism, so in considering such breaches, we can begin with "race." In the eighteenth century *race* named lineal descent and tradition, not appearance, and there were as many races as there were clans or tribes. Only in the nineteenth century did it become primarily a matter of physical appearance. Later, after it became an object of science, race came to mean an essentially temporal and developmental phenomenon rather than either a given morphology or a matter of familial descent. Scientific studies of race quickly became hierarchical taxonomies that privileged white Europeans and that gave rise to the eugenics movement, which was then disrupted by both political and scientific events in the 1930s. After World War II, racism began to be treated as a hallmark of ignorance and then as a deep-seated psychological trait, as opposed to a rationally communicable belief system. In this new intellectual climate, arguments could be made against (some) racist laws and practices, and civil rights movements for oppressed minorities and underclasses gained traction. Whereas racism had once been the avowed position of respected elites, it was now the pernicious fantasy of the ignorant or sick, and the way to fight it was through education, therapy, and moral suasion. If we study the transformations in power that occurred surrounding these various shifts, we may develop an understanding of racism that will inspire new and possibly more effective strategies for combatting it.

What realignments of forces—institutions, practices, theories, values, eruptive events effected such shifts? Having identified breaches of self-evidence, historical moments when big shifts in practices seem to have occurred, the genealogist seeks the multiplicity of "connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary" (Foucault 1994, 226–227). The goal is to produce a description of forces surrounding these disruptions of continuity. Very likely this effort will lead outside the field in which the "object" occurs. Foucault notes, for example, that his study of imprisonment practices in *Discipline and Punish* led to analysis of schooling, military discipline, and so on (Foucault 1994, 227; 1978). Foucault's research trajectory followed practical concerns that had generated disciplinary regimes that practitioners then articulated in abstract, communicable terms. This facilitated importation of those practices and their rationalities to other domains (imprisonment practices being only one), and the overall result has been an archive for genealogists to exploit.

Genealogy is thus analytic and diagnostic. Its discoveries implicitly suggest where we might focus our attention by revealing the points at which a network of power is, despite its appearance of invulnerability, potentially unstable, thus providing clues for how to transform the practices that shape us. Genealogy is not inherently normative in the sense of advocating a set of values and a plan of action. It is a tool for those who want to formulate values and plans, to make change.

If we want to dismantle the institutions and practices that are racism today, taking up the genealogical tool means, first, looking at these moments where racism, while recognizable in some degree, is differently manifested. The rise of scientific racism is one such moment in comparison with racisms informed by the lineal concept of race that preceded it (see McWhorter 2009, 55–62). Subsequently we can identify others, such as eugenics and practices of surveillance, control, and normalization that have endured through neoliberalism.

## A GENEALOGICAL FRAGMENT: THE PREHISTORY OF SCIENTIFIC “RACE”

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Our genealogy might begin as the eighteenth century drew to a close, with the onset of convergence among disparate practices that would, along with a series of political events, soon generate what we now call scientific racism. Among them were three: (1) the overturning of the theory of preformation and its replacement with a version of epigenesis, and subsequently, the biological theory that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, (2) the question of human diversity in comparative anthropology, and (3) the problematization of the slave trade and then slavery as an American institution. These three different sets of events supported a shift in the meaning of *race* from lineal descent to morphology; race became less a matter of ancestry and more a matter of visible embodiment as it was affected by environmental factors. That is, races could be classified by direct observation and their observed differences explained by ancient patterns of migration to different climates (see Kant 2000, 13ff; Smith 1965).

Not until the twentieth century was there a concept of culture as plural—as in the relatively recent concept of “multiculturalism.” Instead, anthropologists spoke of civilization, a unitary phenomenon. Some racialized groups lived according to the standards of civilization, and some did not. Anthropologists used the newly prevailing concept of race—human bodies in long-term interaction with climate—to explain this observed “fact”: Comfortable climates present few challenges and require little innovation for survival; consequently, sophisticated forms of technology and government never emerge in them. It just so happened that almost all dark-skinned peoples inhabited congenial climates (the brown “Laplanders” were an explicable exception), while whites inhabited harsh ones. *Voilà*, morphology and civilization converged (Jefferson 1944, 88; Kant 2000, 17).

This convergence presupposed an earlier scientific controversy between epigenesis, the view that living matter actually organizes itself into new configurations; and preformationism, the idea that, while living matter grows or declines, it cannot change its form, which was resolved by the nineteenth century in favor of epigenesis (Müller-Sievers 1997, 28, 38–41).

With the triumph of epigenesis, natural historians began to find developmental forces inherent in matter itself, allowing living matter to change in response to environmental conditions. Thus natural history gave way to the new science of biology, the science of life. Among the many ideas that appeared upon this transformation was anatomist Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer’s suggestion that stages of mammalian fetal development replicate the adult morphologies of other creatures. His claim inspired Johann von Autenrieth, who held that higher mammals (e.g., humans) exhibit the morphologies of lower animals (e.g., fish)

on their way to expressing their species-appropriate forms, a view later encapsulated in the phrase "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." In other words, lower animals are but living stages of higher animals' development in utero; higher animals thus coexist alongside the living forms they have surpassed (Gould 1977, 126).

Biologists' attention to fetal development was paralleled by a new attention to development in the emerging field of comparative anthropology. Based on a collection of "specimens" from Africa, Tasmania, and Australia in 1800, European anthropologists held that peoples in different parts of the world differ anatomically in such features as arm length relative to height, genital size, and most important, cranial capacity. Anthropologists used this new collection, in addition to Blumenbach's eighteenth-century collection, as the basis not only for typological theories but also for a developmental theory of racial difference (Gould 1977, 82–107, 122–142).

Anatomical differences between groups, already understood as the effects of environment, were now seen as indications of more and less developmental progress. In warm, fertile areas where little effort is required to feed oneself and little preparation for seasonal changes is necessary, people did not develop large brains and therefore had relatively small crania. In cold, harsh climates where lack of foresight and hard work results in death by starvation, people developed large brains and had large crania. Beyond serving as an indicator of racial difference, then, cranial capacity became a measure of both differential intellectual and social racial development. This measure also indicated that women are less developed than the men of their respective race, and it bespoke race and sex differences in the capacity to solve problems, exercise sound judgment and self-control, and in general govern one's own life and the lives of others. New anthropological theories of race suggested that the peoples of Africa and the Southern Hemisphere were simply less intellectually and morally capable than (male) peoples in Northern Europe and, hence, less civilized (Jefferson 1944; Kant 2000).

The new biology and the new anthropology reinforced each other, giving rise to a widespread belief, among educated Europeans and North Americans, that adult white males were not merely physically different from, but more and better developed than white children and females, and nonwhite peoples everywhere. When the American institution of chattel slavery came under fire in the nineteenth century, these theories were marshaled to lend it scientific defense and through repetition in public discourse gained wide currency even among less educated whites. The "lower" races had to be kept under close surveillance and supervision, so the thinking went, because they were like the children of the "higher" races in terms of their cognitive abilities and capacity to delay gratification. Freedom for them would be disastrous, because they would act on impulse, without considering consequences. They would not be able to take care of themselves. Worse still, they would pose a danger to whites, just as gangs of unsupervised adolescents tend to run amok, respecting neither property nor persons (see Fitzhugh 1960; Wish 1960; Connor 1965; Muhammad 2010, 17–20).

No one at the time called this body of work "scientific racism." That appellation was coined in the twentieth century to name something that social and biological scientists were interested in repudiating. In the nineteenth century, on the contrary, what we now call "scientific racism" was, simply, *science*—scientific study of the perceived anatomical and social differences across human groups. Its practitioners were among the most renowned scholars and experimentalists of their time such as Samuel George Morton, Josiah Nott, George Glidden, and Louis Agassiz. Among their influential works were Morton's 1839 *Crania Americana* and

1844 *Crania Aegyptiaca* and Nott and Glidden's 1854 *Types of Mankind* (see Fredrickson 1971, 77; Brace 2005, 80). Yet, by the mid-twentieth century, this body of work was the object of ridicule and condemnation. Things—power relations—had shifted dramatically. Here is another moment for genealogical analysis.

## TWO CONCEPTS: NORMALIZATION AND BIOPOWER

At this point in the analysis, we do well to employ two concepts that Foucault introduced in his genealogies of modern incarceration and sexuality: normalization and biopower. "Normalization" is a set of management techniques that became ubiquitous over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They grew out of disciplinary techniques adapted from monastic practices for pedagogy and military training. Adaptation for the military occurred, according to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, when authorities in Europe began to conscript soldiers from the peasantry rather than exclusively from the nobility. Warriors were no longer born but were made out of ordinary bodies. Recruits required discipline. New techniques enabled military leaders to treat bodies as sets of movable parts that could be trained through graduated exercises to interact in ways conducive to both good soldiering and strict obedience to commanders (Foucault 1978, 138). Bodies were effectively machines that could be retooled. Over time, however, trainers realized that not all bodies responded to these techniques. Some just could not manage a rifle, march in time, or follow instructions. Similarly, educators discovered that no matter how carefully they adjusted their disciplinary practices, some pupils did not conform. Some bodies were stubborn; it was as if, unlike machines, they had their own internal temporality of development—as if, as biologists soon began to say, living matter had its own inherent principles of self-organization.

The best option was not to work against these posited forces but to harness and guide them. Disciplinarians observed developmental trajectories and kept records from which they generated statistical norms. These norms could, in turn, be used to assess and evaluate individuals and devise yet more carefully calibrated disciplinary techniques for training outliers. Mechanical discipline gave way to normalizing discipline. Development was not only a phenomenon to be studied, as biologists at the time were beginning to do; it was a force to be managed and a resource to be cultivated (Foucault 1978, 168–169).

Normalizing disciplinary practices swiftly spread—from military camps and schools to hospitals and asylums—and it made possible new institutions as well, such as the modern mental institution and the prison. Sexuality, conceived not as simple reproductive activity but as developmental mentality and behavior, came into existence in this midst of this explosion of normalizing disciplinary practices, as Foucault demonstrates in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Sexuality became the engine of much of individual development and, through reproduction and family life, the engine of social and species development as well (Foucault 1980, 68–69). By the end of the nineteenth century, sexuality functioned as both guarantor of and greatest danger to each individual's developmental health, as well as the reproduction of the next generation. It became, therefore, the managerial key to a vast number of other aspects of human life; educators, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, physicians, and criminologists (among others) set to work to determine its norms in order to control and cultivate its forces. As these techniques took hold, all sorts of governmental institutions

began to make human life "itself," that is, the vital processes that characterized their populations, the target of power—hence Foucault's term "biopower." The analytic value of these two concepts will be evident in our next genealogical fragment.

## ANOTHER GENEALOGICAL FRAGMENT: EUGENICS

These techniques, which included surveillance and data gathering, conditioned and were conditioned by the sciences of the time. Scientific racism, rapidly assimilating Darwin's evolutionary theory, promoted the idea that Northern Europeans and their American descendants were at the forefront of human development, far superior in intellect, self-control, and physical fitness to their "Asiatic," "Indian," "Negro," and "Mediterranean" contemporaries, who represented stages of evolution that whites had long surpassed. Northern Europeans had become superior because of the pressures of the environments where they had evolved. Cold, harsh climates killed individuals who lacked the physical strength, intellectual ability, and self-restraint to work and plan ahead for winter scarcity, leaving only those who were "fit" for that climate to survive and propagate. Warm, inviting climates produced no such pressure, so the stupid and the impulsive could flourish and prevail. However, in the midst of new techniques for managing individual development, science gave reasons for concern regarding racial development, which they understood as coextensive with human development.

Evolutionary conditions had obviously changed. First, Northern Europeans were not confined to Northern Europe anymore, but had spread over the globe, where many inhabited warm and fertile climates. Furthermore, Europeans' and Euro-Americans' superior technologies had made their lives much easier; steam and coal engines made production less taxing, and medicine allowed even the weak to survive and reproduce. Their Christian morals led them to pity the less well endowed and provide for them what they could not provide for themselves, thereby further increasing the number of those who would have perished in former times. In short, the evolutionary pressure was off. And that "fact," coupled with the "fact" that descendants of Northern Europeans now lived among members of the "lower races" with whom some of them might mate (voluntarily or involuntarily as the result of the latter's impulsive violence), inspired fear that human evolution was about to come to a grinding halt. The white race was committing suicide.

This fear might have remained confined to scientifically educated elites, had it not been for a number of other events that affected a broader swath of the population in the United States and Western Europe. Labor leaders were interested in curbing the influx of immigrants to keep wages up. The alleged developmental inferiority of Asians and Southern and Eastern Europeans cemented an otherwise unlikely alliance between a professional class and labor unions (Reilly 1991, 23–24). Capitalists feared Eastern European immigrants would bring with them anarchism and communism and stir up trouble that would threaten their business interests. Immigration restrictions enacted in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe through the early twentieth century accorded with several agendas, as well as science. Local governmental officials were interested in reducing the number of beggars and drifters; scientific racism provided them with arguments for state and federal spending on institutions to confine such people and sex-segregate them so they could not produce more

mouths to feed (Carlson 2001, 188–194). Reformers wanted to clean up tenements, rescue children from negligent parents, and minister to the mentally ill, which pitted them against slum lords, reluctant governments, and taxpayers, but the new concern with bettering the human race gave them momentum. When financial constraints clashed with goals of such “racial hygiene,” resourceful reformers sought legislation to allow, instead of lifelong institutionalization, mass sterilization of the poor, the immoral, the mentally ill, and the cognitively disabled, all of whom were now seen as drags on human evolution. We see a similar alliance between race science and the birth control movement. Disparate though these movements and concerns were, they coalesced to produce new social and political practices that contributed to twentieth-century eugenics (Brunius 2006; McWhorter 2009, 203–230).

Sexuality was key to racial discipline, to the management of human evolution for the purpose of “fitness” and “betterment,” just as it was to individual development and maldevelopment. Eugenicists sought to control the sexuality of “inferior individuals” to prevent inferiority from reproducing itself. The aim was to protect the white nuclear family and the future, “better” population whose birth depended upon it (Smith and Nelson 1989, 234; Kline 1997, 106ff; Carlson 2001, 204–214). At the movement’s height, eugenic rhetoric infused virtually all public discourse in industrialized countries. Purging the human race of inferior “germ plasm” through managed sexuality was a progressive enterprise, the new heart of social reform. This was the first major consolidation of “biopower” (Foucault 1978, 140); the target of the exercise of power on a massive scale was human biological existence.

Then came Hitler. Eugenics opponents were quick to point out the similarities—indeed, the continuity—between domestic eugenics policies and Hitler’s campaigns against the disabled and the non-“Aryan.” Eugenics’ progress stalled as policymakers grew reluctant to be perceived as “Hitlerite.” Social and biological scientists began distancing their work from their forebears. “New” developments in genetics (some of which were already thirty years old) were brought forward to undercut eugenicist positions and proposals (Larson 1995, 147; Carlson 2001, 285; McWhorter 2009, 231–244).

In response, the movement changed tactics. American Eugenics Society President Frederick Osborn embraced the new science, which showed that, statistically, there was actually more variation of genotypes within groups than between them. “[I]t would be unwise for eugenicists to impute superiorities or inferiorities of a biological nature to social classes, to regional groups, or to races as a whole,” he wrote. “Eugenics should therefore operate on the basis of individual selection” (Osborn 1937, 106). Eugenicists still believed that, on balance, white people were superior, but they admitted that there might be some fit Negroes, Jews, and Asiatics. Policies discriminating against entire racial groups were thus counterproductive. Eugenicists turned to marriage and then genetics counseling to influence “natural” selection, meanwhile changing the names of their organizations and publications. Population management for the betterment of the human race was still their goal, but efforts would be focused on influencing individual choice rather than dictating law or policy.

However, by World War II, eugenic values were deeply embedded in popular culture in almost all industrialized nations. While the overarching goal of (human) race betterment was officially repudiated, bias toward the poor, disabled, and dark-skinned remained (Gannett 2001, 490; McWhorter 2009, 245–258). Quite apart from that, however, biopolitical techniques of population management had proven extremely useful in furthering a wide variety of governmental and financial goals. Keeping populations under surveillance and segregating them for productive efficiency and risk reduction were essential means for



managing a growing industrial economy. It was necessary to renounce racial “prejudice” (officially and scientifically), so steps were taken to disavow “racism,” while surveillance, data collection, and population management intensified (Kline 1997, 104).

Production, circulation, and technological progress became more important than race betterment. But ideas for achieving those ends were formed in a eugenic era, where it was assumed that productive, innovative, and law-abiding individuals matched the profile of the supposed *evolutionary avant garde*: male, “fit” (not disabled), of normal intelligence quotient, heterosexual, and of Northern European descent (Paul 1995, 125; 1998, 142). Such individuals were produced in households made up of father-headed families with clear gender and racial divisions and identities. Thus the biopolitical focus became the individual and his or her role in the nuclear family. Immigration restrictions persisted, then, and sterilizations continued into the 1970s. But the reasons given (if ever anyone asked) cited individual well-being and economic benefit.

“Racism” itself was invented in this process. The term was coined as a means of distinguishing good exercises and networks of biopower from bad. Hitler was a racist because, unlike Osborn, he assumed *all* members of the Jewish and Negro races were unfit and treated them as such, indiscriminately. According to Osborn’s new dicta, he should have judged them fit or unfit as individuals. The rhetoric of individuality and the celebration of the individualizing nuclear family as the cradle of humanity’s future replaced the rhetoric of racial hygiene. But institutionalized oppression went largely unchallenged.

## RACISM IN A DISCIPLINARY SOCIETY

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The deeply embedded assumption that the heterosexual nuclear family was requisite for normal development that would lead to success persisted in government, courts, education, and medicine. People who did not come from or form such families (and lived in single parenthood, homosexual pairing, multigenerational households, or by themselves) were deviant and likely dangerous (Goddard 1927, 101). Likewise, poverty was a clear indicator of intellectual or moral developmental failure. But some institutional innovation did occur as a retreat from early eugenic racial profiling. In the United States, a new concern for “underprivileged” children and a willingness to reconsider Jim Crow emerged in a few corners of public discourse (driven in part by the fact that Soviet propaganda used Jim Crow to illustrate the hypocrisy of liberal capitalism). Here and there a progressive white person suggested that every individual should have an opportunity to prove himself (or even herself), that equal opportunity meant that Negro children get the same schooling as whites, or that children of the poor needed a “head start” in order to take advantage of the schooling offered to them. A booming postwar economy financed programs designed to provide opportunities, and an organized civil rights movement coupled with the new technology of television generated images of respectable Negroes who asked to be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their characters (Johnson 2007).

As long as advocates for social justice—racial or economic (or even sexual)—stuck to the normalizing, individualist agenda, their claims could be assimilated to biopolitical networks that now permeated liberal capitalism. By contrast, structural analyses got little traction, and their advocates were labeled as Communists. Still, as doors opened for many people, racism

was declared a thing of the past; only backward people were racists anymore, and society as a whole could not be held responsible for their actions or attitudes (Bonilla-Silva 2003, 173). Elites made a point of marginalizing those “backward” people and spotlighting members of formerly “inferior” racial groups who had seized opportunities and proven themselves normal people, even individuals of merit.

Race no longer signified more or less stable stages of human development; indeed, races were no longer intellectually or morally homogenous groups. Racism, as it was construed when the term was introduced, really did recede into the backwaters; psychologists declared it abnormal, the symptom of developmental failure and mental pathology. But the result was not racial equality. And it could not have been. The norms by which individuals were to be measured had arisen in the context of white supremacy and capitalist production and consumption. Normal human development was modeled on white, Protestant, middle-class, heterosexual development, and it was measured by white, mostly Protestant, middle- and upper-middle-class, and at least officially heterosexual, clinicians and educators. Moreover, the outcomes that proved normal development had occurred were bodied forth in the lifestyles of middle-class white married couples raising normal children. Racist beliefs were generally discredited; racist attitudes were generally condemned. But the idea that people should be subject to continual surveillance and measurement against developmental norms is still firmly in place. Not every member of previously “inferior” races is subject to racial “prejudice” at every moment and in every context, as their ancestors were. But at the first sign of “abnormality” the old mechanisms of containment and constraint will close in. We live in a normalizing society, as Foucault declared. And this fact falls especially hard on anyone who does not fit the implicitly white ideal. But that is not what a majority of people believe.

Most white people and many people of color, at least in the United States, are loath to think that white supremacy is an inherent feature of our capitalist, neoliberal society. Instead, they think racial inequalities linger because some whites still judge individuals by their racial identities rather than their personal merit. Perhaps unconsciously or secretly, twenty-first-century whites really do believe old-style scientific racist tenets. The answer, therefore, is more moral exhortation, more education, or elimination of all such people from positions of authority—more of what has been done for the last sixty years. Those strategies did combat some forms of racism and did make many people’s lives much better. But their efficacy has empirically obvious limits. By revealing the power of normalization rather than veiled scientific racism at the center of many contemporary racist effects, genealogical analysis suggests a different approach. What must be dismantled is not a belief system or even individual attitudes; it is normalizing discipline and its accompanying practices of biopower. The solution is not to raise everybody to acceptable standards of normality; it is to undermine normality’s power to dictate the terms of human lives.

## RACISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

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Much has changed since Foucault’s analyses of normalization and biopower in the 1970s. It would be foolish not to take genealogical account of that change, some of which, remarkably, Foucault himself anticipated. In his lecture series at the Collège de France in 1979 (Foucault 2008, 317), he discussed a phenomenon just then emerging, which, following

Milton Friedman, he termed "neoliberalism." Since 1979, neoliberalism has become the prevailing mode of governing in capitalist countries and their client states. Whatever race and racism are in the twenty-first century, they are undoubtedly deeply marked by neoliberalism, for if they were not they could not persist in this transformed political and social terrain. To understand and counter the racism we face, we must analyze this new formation of biopower.

Foucault traces neoliberalism to reactions against governments' taking on the well-being of their populations as a central function, as was supposedly done in enactment of the Beveridge Report in Great Britain, the New Deal in the United States, and during German reconstruction after World War II (Foucault 2008, chapters 5–7, 9). Neoliberals held that government's central function is to provide the national security and legal structure to insure contracts. It should not regulate prices, markets, or industries; provide consumer or environmental or worker protections; or guarantee people education, health care, or jobs. The market will take care of all those things if governments refrain from interfering. Moreover, government assets beyond those absolutely essential for functioning of security, courts, and legislatures should be privatized. In a booming economy, Keynesian economic policies remained in force, but once the postwar economy stagnated, neoliberalism got a hearing, and neoliberals were elected to office. Their policies set in motion a global movement whose new normal now pervades capitalist society discursively and, to a great extent, politically and legally as well (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009).

Neoliberalism valorizes competition and individualizes both failure and success; moral worth is equated with competitive success in material terms. To this extent, it replicates the major features of disciplinary normalization. But there are differences, two of which will suffice as illustration. For capitalism to expand beyond colonization of previously noncapitalist regions, consumers' desires must expand and diversify. A diversity of cultures fosters a diversity of desires, especially if one set of cultural consumables can be marketed to members of other cultures as a new fashion. Neoliberal individualism differs from the individualization of normalizing discipline, therefore, in that it encourages (some) divergence from norms. Gay is good if it presents a demand for specialized vacations. Black is beautiful if it sells sneakers and baggy jeans. Neoliberalism encourages departures from the norm as long as they can be construed as matters of taste and those exhibiting them are moneyed enough to function as consumers. Industrialized production required rigorous discipline on a massive scale; postindustrial consumption requires a certain (controlled) lack of discipline. A genealogy of racism in the twenty-first century would need to identify the points at which normalizing discipline retreats and those at which it remains in force, and how that happens.

A second illustrative difference concerns the fate of those who are not moneyed enough to consume—an increasingly large number as neoliberalism makes possible a striking new concentration of wealth. Industrial production absorbed enormous numbers of people as laborers. Neoliberalism does not need nearly so many of them. If they have no income streams other than that generated by labor, there is no place for them. They are not drags on evolution, but they may be drags on the economy, especially if their poverty drives them to steal or riot.

Any analysis of racial oppression in the present day must take account of these changes—of the new ways in which nonwhite populations and cultures can be and sometimes are treasured and of the ways in which both nonwhite and white populations can be simply abandoned, incarcerated, or otherwise "encouraged" to pass out of existence. This is not our

foreparents' racism, which does not mean that it is not racism at all. It simply means we have genealogical work to do before we can formulate the strategies we need to dismantle the structures that oppress us.

## CONCLUSION

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Foucault's examination of neoliberalism stopped at 1980, but the tools he provided via concepts such as normalization and biopower and methods such as genealogy can be used to study this new racial situation. How useful they will be is an empirical question and a question of strategy. What is obvious, however, is that racism cannot be fully understood, let alone countered, if we insist that it is merely a matter of individual choices, actions, attitudes, and beliefs. "Both race and racism are profoundly historical," Angela Davis reminds us. Even if biological and essentialist racisms no longer hold sway: "It would be erroneous to assume that we can also willfully extricate ourselves from histories of race and racism. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we continue to inhabit these histories, which help constitute our social and psychic worlds" (Davis 2012, 169). That is, racism cannot be addressed without knowledge of the historical forces that brought us to this point and the biopolitical networks that currently enforce it.

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